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648

[463]

[177]

[341]

[342]

[171]

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[342]

[171]

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341

But even later, after the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Bulgaria, according to Zlatev (p. 154) has enjoyed peace and quietness under the strong Turkish authority and when together with economic flourish the building art progressed, especially in the mountainous areas, even then the construction of houses, in Bulgaria and in the rest of Balcan countries was done by foreign, mainly Greek, builders from Western Macedonia and Epirus, the famous «Mastorochoria» (builder's villages)<sup>(1)</sup>.

We can thus explain the great similarity between the Bulgarian rural, and later urban, house to the Greek house as regards arrangement of spaces external architecture and the methods of building. Consequently, the evolution presented by the Bulgarian house from its simplest original forms to the more composite ones, not only on the former Greek lands (Rodope, Eastern Roumelia, Plate XVI) but also in the districts over the Haimos mountains (Plate XIII-XV) it is the same as that of the Greek house.

Zlatev knows the builders of Western Macedonia when he says that it is they who introduced the beautiful arched capitals to Western Bulgaria, that sometimes hang freely at the prostoön of the houses. But Zlatev sees in these a mark of the «Italian Renaissance» which «the Macedonians transferred from the eastern shores of the Adriatic (!) to Western Bulgaria» (p. 155). This Italian Renaissance, according to the Bulgarian architect, «was also transplanted in the house building of Eastern Bulgaria, yet through another route, namely through Constantinople and Adrianople, and the Aegean coasts, where it took a Byzantine influence»! That is to say, Zlatev does recognize

tine court in everything. There were many foreign prisoners in the Bulgarian capital who were specialists in various arts, as well as free Byzantine master-technicians, even during the periods when the relations of Bulgaria with Byzantium were peaceful. We can safely say that the first teachers of the Bulgarians on art, crafts and handicrafts were foreigners. Everything which the court or the aristocrats needed, was made by these artisans. The fact that Greek craftsmen were teachers of the Bulgarians in building churches and houses, and that Byzantium sent craftsmen, builders, painters etc. into Bulgaria, may be seen in I. Sakazov, op. cit. pp. 46, 59, 78.

1) On a total of twenty ancient tombs excavated in W. Macedonia by A. Keramopoulos, four contained, among other offerings, the tools of the dead (Minutes of Arch. Society, 1934, p. 77, 79, 80). It can be thus said that the craft of house-builder has been handed from father to son in that area for at least 2000 years. (See Ant. Keramopoulos, *Ti elva oi Kousoßlaçois* Athens 1939, p. 56). About Epirote craftsmen see Ang. Hadjimichail, *Ηπειρωτική λαϊκή τέχνη*, *Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά* Ε' 1930 p. foll and «La maison grecque» in *L'Hellénisme Contemporain*, Ser. II, 3 (1949) pp. 250 foll.

G

[172]

[463]

[331]

A

in Central and Southern Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. He moreover tends to consider their «naturalisation» as the work of travelling builders, who belonged to the builders' guilds, because of the fact that they are called «mastori» in Albania.

Nopcsa remarks to the above, (p. 54) that the word «maistor» has been used in Serbia since 1350 and that it is common in Byzantium in the form of «Protomaistor». It would, however, be more correct to say that the words «maistor» and «protomaistor» that originate in the Latin word «magister» (earlier: μάγιστρος, μαγιστρον) have had the meaning of a nobleman or a teacher first, and later that of

342

712

177

[463]

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[192]

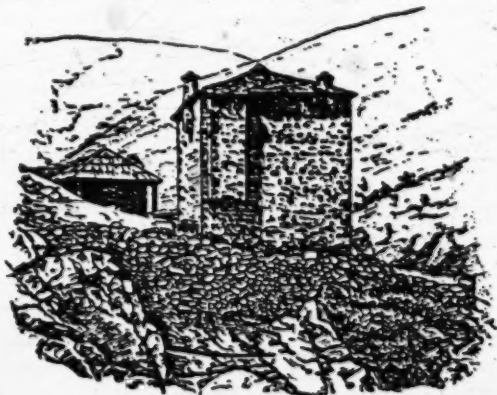


Fig. 75. A kula in Sapatsi, in the area of the Berisha tribe

(Nopcsa, fig. 41)

a craftsman and a master-artisan, since the first Byzantine years; and they are used in exactly the same spelling in modern Greek language, under exactly the same form as in Albania, i.e. mastoras-mastoroi and protomastoras. A great number of villages in Epirus, Western Macedonia and the Pindus, especially in the areas of Konitsa, Korytsa, Metsovon, Malakassi, Houliarades, Tzoumerka and Voion, are known as «Μαστοροχώρια» (builders' villages), because almost all their inhabitants have been builders by profession centuries ago. For months on end, carrying the tools of their craft, they travelled all over the Balkan peninsula as far as Bucharest and Constantinople, and more so in Epirus and Albania, in groups or guilds, under the leadership

A

[192]

G

[331]

[467]

[484]

A

[463]

1) Sophocles' Dictionary: μάγιστρος and μαγιστρον: master-workman, master-builder.

2 [i.e. Haberlandt - ANALYST.]

of a masterbuilder<sup>(1)</sup>. Haberlandt is then right when he states that the construction of Albanian towers was the work of travelling builder's guilds. The origin, however, of these builders must not be sought, as Haberlandt suggests, in the countries over the Adriatic and in Southern Italy; neither, as Nopcsa thinks, in Northern Italy and the Alpine regions, but in the Balkan peninsula itself, in an area which is very near to Albania as well, and whose inhabitants knew both the Albanian language and their customs well, so that they could freely enter that rough and inhospitable country.<sup>(2)</sup>

It is true that in Greece towers are only found in Mani, because social conditions and especially the vendetta have made defensive measures against personal and family enemies necessary, exactly as in Chimara and Albania. Before the liberation of Thessaly, however, the system of the above fortified towers was widely prevalent there,

1) Here below I am giving a translation of a recently published survey by Mrs. A. Hadjimihail: 'La maison grecque'. Each of these builders' villages has specialised in some part of building. Certain villages supplied builders, others decorators, others painters, woodworkers, etc. All these builders were known under the general name of 'μαστόροι', whatever their speciality was. The master-builders, each leading a group of builders, formed notable guilds known under the local name of 'λογάρι'. In Yannena, the builders' guild counted about 450 members, belonging to various branches of building art.

Each master-builder was the head of a group of about 10-20 men. Groups, however, who undertook big construction projects, had sometimes up to 100 men: builders, marble sculptors, decorators, painters, carpenters, turners, woodcarvers, etc. These builder guilds were leaving their villages under the leadership of their masters towards the middle of February and went to the place where work had been found. Their departure was cause for feasts, and so was their return in December, or round Christmas to the latest. (A description of these feasts is given here). These guilds were thus travelling from Macedonia and Epirus, all over the Balkan peninsula as far as Bucharest, Constantinople and even Asia Minor. Buildings constructed by these groups are found in all these countries: Graceful bridges on bold arches, famous churches, monasteries, immense caravan seraja, houses of noblemen, public buildings, palaces, minarets, mosques, bell-towers, etc. (L'Hellénisme Contemporain, Serie B, year 3, (1949) p. 250)

See also note 2 on page 79. Builders of Epirus, who have constructed the beautiful noblehouses of Western Macedonia, seem to be fully aware of the value and perfection of their work. One of the most beautiful houses of Siatista, built in 1754, has the following inscription on a glass pane: 'Should you ask, my lords, what builder built this house, Nacos is his name, and he comes from Konitsa'. (Ο Φάρος της Βορ. Ελλάδος, 1939 p. 242).

2) Ph. Koukoules. Περί τῆν βυζαντινῶν οἰκιῶν, p. 117.

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342 living space for men and women (haremlik for the women and  
171 selamlık for the men)<sup>(1)</sup>.

177 It may be said as a conclusion to the whole survey that, if we  
177 except simple primitive forms of the Albanian house, that belong  
G probably to very ancient housing and building habits bequeathed to  
177 Albanians by the ancient Illyrians and Thracians, all the composite  
types of houses and especially the two-floor prostyle ones, as developed by the various modifications of the prostoon (προστώον), as well as all forms of towers (kulas) have been imported into Albania from outside. Not only technique and evolution, but also geographical and historical relationship persuade that this progress of Albanian architecture is due to the activity of Epirot and Macedonian builders who, with their traditional technical skill, introduced better and more composite forms of housing into Albania. These builders, who travelled all over the country, have built many houses and have taught the art of building both to Albanians and to the other Balkan peoples.

G  
● [33]

<sup>1)</sup> See the plan of an Albanian urban house of Berat by Ekrem bel Vlora p 57 and Plate VI.